

[Ben Noricoff]

2260-JEW DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St. Lincoln Nebr.

DATE Oct. 5, 1938 SUBJECT Russian-Jewish Folklore. Capital Cleaners

1. Name and address of informant. Ben [?] [Novicoff?] —So. 17th St. Lincoln

2. Date and time of interview. Oct. 5, 1938—1 to 4 p.m.

3. Place of interview. Tailor Shop & Home of informant.

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

None. Personal contract.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you. None.

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Informant lives in his tailor shop, a small room on So. 17th St. Usual tailoring equipment and some living furnishings. Works and lives here. The surroundings are, of course, down town business section near "O" st. This arrangement is an economical one and reflects the saving nature of the informant.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

DATE Oct. 5, 1938 SUBJECT Russian-Jewish Folklore

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NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Ben Noricoff—So. 17th St. Lincoln.

1. Ancestry. German-Russian Jewish
2. Place and date of birth. Ladde, Mahaluf, Russia. Dec. 1883
3. Family. 3 daughters, wife dead. Father & Mother dead burried in U.S.A.
4. Place lived in, with dates. Russia 1883 to 1906. Cairo, Egypt 1906 to 1908. New York (Brooklyn) 1908 to 1916. Moberly, Missouri 1916-Lincoln Neb. 1916 to Date.
5. Education, with dates. Hebrew school at Ladde Russia, 1890 to 1900.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates. Tailoring 1890 to 1901. Russian army 1901 to 1906. Regular soldier work, tailoring (Cairo) 1906-1908. U.S. 1908 to date.
7. Special skills and interests. Mostly tailoring and business.
8. Community and religious activities. Hebrew church or Synagogue.
9. Description of informants. Average size physcally. Jewish expression but features regular. Seems somewhat inhibited and shown the restraint, evidently developed in European Experience.
10. Other points gained in interview. Likes this country and believes in its present Leaders. Says that those dissatisfied here should see what goes on in the old world, and if they find fault let them present some good plan to help things along.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St. Lincoln

DATE Oct. 5, 1938 SUBJECT Russian-Jewish Folklore

Library of Congress

NAME AND ADDRESS Of INFORMANT Ben Noricoff—So, 17th St. Capital Cleaners.)

My people came from Germany to Russia. As to our name, "Novi" means now or newcomer, "coff" was added to conform with the Russian name "White Russia". My state was 'mahnlof' The country was Horky. The city was "Ladde" It was two or three days trip by train from Moscow, Russian trains were slow and this did not mean so many miles. I went to Hebrew school. We read from right to left or opposite to English writing. I learned tailoring when young and worked at it until I was taken into the Russian army in 1901. In 1902 I went into regular army work and continued until 1906. In 1903 there was war between Russia and Japan. This was settled In 1905.

Army life was bad. Miserable clothing, food and quarters. There was a revolution in 1905. [My?] Co. was in it. Most of it took place around the Black Sea. There were mine carriers mixed up in the thing. When I came out from the army I made up my mind to leave Russia and I got me a passport for myself and more than half of the family. I had a brother in Egypt so went there. We went by the way of Odessa, Russia, took a boat to Constantinople, Turkey. We [staid stad?] there a week and then went to Alexandria Egypt. From there we took train to Cairo, Egypt.

I got a job in Cairo with one of the biggest department stores there, tailoring as alteration man. The population was very much mixed and one had to know the different languages. The main language was Arabian, with 2 Italian, Spanish, English, German, and French. The Mohammedans used to get together and punish themselves with iron chains, knives etc. They would stand in a ring bleeding like a killed hog, praying to "allah' We came to United States in 1908 (Brooklyn) I was married in 1909. The young Jewish people court until they know the printed agreements. When engaged they give each other presents.

When I was engaged my girl gave me a watch and chain. (This was customary) I gave her a couple of diamond earrings and a locket.

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After the engagement the friends and family give a big blowout. They set a time for the wedding. The bride, for a week before she is married is not supposed to go on the street alone at night. This was so she could keep away from all men and evil things.

At the marriage the Jewish and English lines were read. The wedding is always in the [synagogue?] and the rabbi signs the papers. There were no honeymoons but later they had them if it could be afforded.

If any son or daughter married out of the race, they were cast out and considered dead. This is not observed any more.

The marriage ceremony and parties sometimes lasted 3 days or more. When a male child is born it has to be circumcised in 8 or 10 days. If a girl they just give their name to the church.

A birth custom is to hang curtains around the bed. On these would be hung religious writings.

We always think that if the day starts good it will end good, but if trouble comes early it will be with us for that day.

If people come to your place of business in the morning and pay money then there will be more money coming that day. Some believe if Monday 3 morning starts good the whole week will be good. Jewish folks therefore try to get a good start and like to deal with the first customer.

This is still believed in. I know this is so because sometimes my sister comes in the morning and leaves work. I always got lots more that day. There are about 250 families of orthodox Jewish in Lincoln.

Today Oct. 5, 1938 is "Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement."

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FORM D

Supplement

Mr. Noricoff can no doubt supply some good material concerning the orthodox Jewish and Hebrew race, given time. There are many German Jews in the United States. Their names are obviously of German origin.

A century or so ago Jews were persecuted in Germany and were not allowed to have names. They were known as 'son of a Jew' and 'daughter of a Jew'. But in time they were allowed to take names. Now their horizon was limited and their knowledge of names lacking. So they took names which could be constructed from the names of familiar scenes.

Thus came such names as Rosenthal (valley of roses)

Blumenthal (valley of flowers)

Greenberg (green mountain).

Greenbaum (green tree)

Grosman (Great man)

Goodman (Gut mann) Good man.

This name was often taken by some one who was a trifle conceited and so they would slap their chest and say 'I am a gut mann or Gros Mann. 'Rothschild' came from the 'red shield' which was awarded to good merchants in Germany. Thus people of this name were apt to be bankers or merchants as is well known. The original form was probably 'Rot Sohuld' Jewish people by the name of 'Rothschild' invariably came from a line of merchants at some time as this name was only available to good merchants and probably bankers.

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In Russia this might not be so as the name is distinctly German in origin. The Reformed Jews, of course, have [?] either grown away from this or else they were never involved in early German life. They use a different cemetery and conform to regular accident life—A finished product of the great 'melting pot.'